

REMARKS

By the present amendment, independent claim 1 has been amended to correct an apparent typographical error and/or to further clarify the concepts of the present invention. Support for the latter claim amendments may be found in the specification in Figure 2 and at page 10, lines 23-25, which shows slider unit 5 as a component of lift-unit 3. Entry of these amendments is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,634,461 to Baker in view of U.S. Patent 6,695,126 to Minamikawa. In making this rejection, it was asserted that the Baker patent discloses all but one of the limitations of the claim, including "a tire supporter driver (an operator) which controls a linear motion of the tire supporter (36) and changes the position of the tire supporter between a tire support position and a passing position." It was acknowledged the Baker patent (which is directed to a mobile lift system for service work whose stanchions are positionable by an operator) fails to show an apparatus for transferring a vehicle between an upper side and lower side of a vehicle conveyance line.

The Minamikawa patent then was cited as showing an apparatus for such transferring (although it fails to show an apparatus for transitioning a vehicle to a lower line, wherein the vehicle is supported on its tires as required by claim 1). It was concluded that it would have been obvious to the skilled person at the time of the subject invention to have

added the teaching from the Minamikawa patent to that of the Baker patent in order to provide for a conveyor system for vehicle bodies. Reconsideration of this rejection in view of the above claim amendments and the following comments is respectfully requested.

Initially, it is noted that the patent to Minamikawa apparently was not included in the Notice of References cited forming part of the Office Action. It is requested that this patent be made of record in the subject application.

In response to the subject rejection, it is submitted that neither the Baker nor Minamikawa patents discloses or suggests the required "tire supporter driver which controls a linear motion of the tire supporter and changes the position of the tire support between a tire support position and a passing position" as is claimed. Further, neither the Baker nor Minamikawa patents shows an apparatus for transferring a vehicle between an upper side and lower side of a vehicle conveyance line which utilizes a tire supporter, particularly one that supports a tire "in the condition that the lower part of the tire is exposed under the tire supporter" as is claimed.

More specifically, it is submitted that the apparatus of the Baker patent, among other things, lacks the required "tire supporter driver which controls a linear motion of the tire supporter and changes the position of the tire supporter between a tire support position and a passing position." Instead, the rejection appears to rely on a human operator to make this right/left adjustment by moving the entire lift, including stanchion. Such an

adjustment is of little practicality to the presently claimed apparatus whose stanchions (as part of a factory floor installation) would not be moved during operation. Moreover, the drawings and specification of the Baker patent do not appear to disclose claim 1's requirement of a tire supporter that supports a tire "in the condition that the lower part of the tire is exposed under the tire supporter."

The above argument has been supported by the amendment to claim 1 herein which now recites that the "linear motion of the tire supporter" is *relative to the lift-unit* with which the tire supporter is associated. It is submitted that this further distinguishes the subject claim over the Baker patent that achieves right/left linear movement only by the operator moving the stanchion to which a tire supporter is fixed.

In summary, it is submitted that the rejection fails to make the required showing of obviousness over the cited patents, because (i) neither the Baker nor the Minamikawa patent discloses or suggests the required "tire supporter driver which controls a linear motion of the tire supporter and changes the position of the tire supporter and changes the position of the tire supporter between a tire support position and a passing position," and (ii) neither the Baker nor Minamikawa patent shows an apparatus for transferring a vehicle between an upper side and lower side of a vehicle conveyance line which utilizes a tire supporter, particularly one that supports a tire "in the condition that the lower part of the tire is exposed under the tire supporter" where it is required that the "linear motion of the tire supporter" is relative to the lift-unit as is recited in amended claim 1.

For the reasons stated above, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) and allowance of claim 1 as amended over the cited patents are respectfully requested.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 2 and 3 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claim 1.

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the subject application is now in condition for allowance and early notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

In the event this paper is not timely filed, the undersigned hereby petitions for an appropriate extension of time. The fee for this extension may be charged to Deposit Account No. 01-2340, along with any other additional fees which may be required with respect to this paper.

Respectfully submitted,

KRATZ, QUINTOS & HANSON, LLP



Donald W. Hanson
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 27,133

Atty. Docket No. 060102
Suite 400, 1420 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 659-2930
DWH/rab



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